

IMAGES IN THE BORDERLANDS

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE
AND THE WORLD

VOLUME 1

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Images in the Borderlands

*The Mediterranean between Christian and Muslim Worlds
in the Early Modern Period*

Edited by

IVANA ČAPETA RAKIĆ AND
GIUSEPPE CAPRIOTTI

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The Bastions of the Ottoman Capital

*The Fortresses of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus Seen
by French Military Engineers, Diplomats, and Travellers
in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*

This very evening, I was with some of these retainers to Neptune. Among the rest of the discourse I had with them, we touched upon the Dardanelles, which guard the Hellespont. They taxed the Christian Princes with cowardice, or unpardonable negligence, that they have never attempted to force their passage through that channel into the Propontis, and block up the imperial city by sea, and set it on fire; especially the royal seraglio, from whence are issued out the decrees of life and death to the whole earth.¹

This text cited from the popular epistolary novel of Giovanni Paolo Marana which became later a source of inspiration for Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* reflects well common European ideas on the military quality of the fortresses defending the entry of the narrow maritime passage leading to Constantinople from Western Europe. Historically, the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea constituted an integral geographical unit, along with the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. As part of the only passage between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, the straits had always been of great importance from economic and military points of view. Constantinople always needed to control this unit for its food supplies, security, and trade. For the Eastern Roman Empire and the Ottoman Empire, the fortresses located on the European and Asian coasts of the straits were places of clashes between armies and civilizations and constitute a symbolic borderland from several points of view. The most important conflict in history was certainly the bloody battle

¹ Marana, *Letters writ by a Turkish spy*, IV, p. 193.

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of Gallipoli in 1915, but the problem of the fortifications of the straits was an important question also during the early modern period. This study would contribute to the history of cartographic representations and sources made by French military experts, diplomats, and travellers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. France had a very ambiguous attitude towards the Ottoman Empire at this time. For example, King François I took advantage of his alliance with Suleyman the Magnificent (1535) against the Habsburg Empire, although other kings of France did not cease to trouble this alliance 'against nature' by projects of crusades and the re-establishment of the Eastern French Empire. With the triumph of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, Constantinople became the only diplomatic centre in the Muslim Mediterranean.² However, the importance of European communities and their commercial interests to certain merchant towns in the Middle East prompted certain states to appoint consuls in provincial localities, the first case being the appointment of a French consul in Alexandria in 1528. The treaties granted by the sultan (the 'capitulations') generally kept the form of unilateral proclamations until the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the decline of the empire. The Peace of Karlowitz,³ signed with the Holy League, the coalition of European powers, in 1699, marked this change of style, from the proclamation to the negotiated document. The French monarchy had ambiguous relations with the Ottoman Empire, which explained on the one hand a friendly relationship in the commercial and religious fields and a distrust of French diplomats considered to be 'honest spies' on Ottoman lands.

This period corresponded to the great progress of warfare in Western Europe, the so-called 'military revolution' which has been remarkably analysed by Michael Roberts, Geoffrey Parker, and Jeremy Black.⁴ The development of artillery transformed radically the art of fortification in Western Europe. Modern fortification spread throughout Europe and was perfected considerably under the influence of engineers such as the Dutch Menno Coëhoorn or the French Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban who introduced the high-quality training of military engineers in France at the end of the seventeenth century. One of the areas neglected by the Ottomans was probably the fortification of the strategic places of their empire, as the fortification work was limited to the areas of the most threatened military borders. The progress of the Western navy and the resurgent Turkish-Venetian conflicts with the participation of Christian forces demonstrate the vulnerable nature of the defence of the core of the Ottoman Empire, which became more and more a colossus with feet of clay.

² With the exception of Morocco, which remained independent.

³ See recently on the history of the treaty of Karlowitz: Béranger, ed., *La paix de Karlowitz* 26 janvier 1699.

⁴ Parker, *The Military Revolution*. See also Black, *A Military Revolution?* and Rogers, *The Military Revolution Debate*.

In the occupied provinces, we can see the deterioration of the city walls and defences, starting with the splendid Byzantine walls around Constantinople. Thus, the fortresses defending the strategic straits of the Marmara Sea were of paramount importance.

By its advantageous location, the city of Constantinople enjoys a natural defence by the straits which communicate between the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea. The Dardanelles are therefore both a gateway to a sea route from one sea to another and a defence system comprising real fortification works whose strength lies above all in their geography. In fact, the narrow sea channel, dotted with fortresses, presents as much difficulty for an enemy fleet as a mountain pass and defile for a land army. Defenders have a primary advantage over attackers. The Dardanelles Strait, also known as Hellespont or Çanakkale in Turkish, takes the form of a canal approximately sixty kilometres long and on average three kilometres wide. In the Middle Ages, the main fortress in the strait was in Gallipoli, at the eastern end of the canal. After the capture of Constantinople by Mehmed II, the geostrategic situation of the Dardanelles changed considerably: they became the lock on Istanbul. Mehmed the Conqueror had two fortresses constructed face to face at the narrowest part of the strait: Kild'ül-Bahir in Europe and Çanak-Kal'asi in Asia. The importance of the fortresses of the Dardanelles increased at the time of the Candian War (1645–1669), led by the Porte against the Republic of Venice. During this war, the Ottoman fleet was twice defeated at the Dardanelles (1650, 1654).⁵ It was the first time in the history of the Ottoman Empire that the capital was threatened by an invasion across the Dardanelles Strait. After, Mehmed Köprülü had the old fortifications reinforced and had two new fortresses built: Sedd'ül-Bahir in Europe and Kumkale in Anatolia.⁶

The beginning of Louis XIV's reign was characterized by the influence of Cardinal Mazarin who supported the war against the Ottomans. Many French volunteers participated in the Candian War alongside the Christian forces, and Louis XIV also sent, in 1664, an auxiliary army of six thousand men to Hungary who distinguished themselves in the Battle of St-Gotthard.⁷ The projects of the European anti-Ottoman coalition and the spirit of Crusades invaded the mind of the young Louis XIV who undertook a policy of greatness in Europe. After Kahlenberg's victory (1683), secret plans to occupy the Ottoman Empire increased. In this situation, some curious military projects emerged in Europe and even in the French government concerning the

5 Setton, *Venice, Austria and the Turks*, pp. 181–82.

6 These fortresses were also represented on the schematic French maps of the seventeenth century. See, for example, *Carte de l'Hellespont ou Canal des Dardanelles* (1686) of Benjamin de Combes, <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53100638k.r=Dardanelles?rk=128756;0>> [accessed 30 May 2021].

7 See on the campaign in 1664 Tóth, *Saint-Gotthard 1664*; Tóth and Zágórhidi Czigány, eds, *A szentgotthárdi csata és a vaskvári béke*, and recently Michels, *The Habsburg Empire under Siege*.

occupation of the strategic provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Maximilien de Béthune, Duke of Sully, François Savary de Brèves, Father Joseph (François Leclerc du Tremblay), Charles I, Count of Nevers, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and other thinkers proposed military interventions and the partition of the empire.⁸ At the end of the seventeenth century, military espionage was often the origin of the iconography of the fortresses of the straits. The French king even sent military engineers to Turkey for reconnaissance of the strategic points around Constantinople. Their reports and drawings constitute very precious holdings in French archives and libraries. One of the most exciting missions was conducted by Étienne Gravier d'Ortières.

In 1685, King Louis XIV sent, with his new ambassador, Pierre Girardin,⁹ a controller general of the marine, Étienne Gravier d'Ortières, whose secret mission was to draw up maps on the Dardanelles and Istanbul in order to prepare a plan for a military occupation of the Ottoman capital. Girardin and Gravier d'Ortières arrived in Constantinople in January 1686. Apart from his commercial mission, Gravier d'Ortières devoted himself entirely to observing the fortifications of the coasts, islands, ports, and especially the Dardanelles. The engineers had to draw up an exact map of the Dardanelles, the ports and roadsteads, sound out the anchorages, and draw up plans of the fortifications. Gravier d'Ortières had under his orders several engineers of the French marine including Plantier who produced high-quality pictures. The engineers' mission lasted until August 1686, during which time they gathered very rich documentation composed of maps, pictures of fortresses made by engineers, and drawings that resemble military photography containing much useful information for military experts.¹⁰ According to Faruk Bilici, these exceptional maps stand out from the collection with their artistic dimension expressing the objective of the secret mission. The allegoric image of the map of the Dardanelles' channel represents the global ambitions of Louis XIV: under the Sun the Ottomans in chains showing the victory of the Most Christian King.¹¹ Most of the documents deal with the strait fortresses, describing them and analysing their military forces. The conclusion of the military experts is the following: if the strait of the Dardanelles is crossed, it is easy to occupy Constantinople because its defence system was defective. Louis XIV's grandiose project remained on paper, as wars with the empire, Spain, England, and Holland prevented its execution.¹² A spy mission similar to that of Gravier d'Ortières was entrusted to the brothers de Combes who carried out a reconnaissance expedition in the Sea of Marmara and in the Archipelago between summer

8 Bilici, *XIV. Louis ve İstanbul'u fetih tasarisi*, pp. 60–89.

9 See on Girardin's embassy in Constantinople Kerekes, ed., *Mémoires sur l'Empire ottoman*.

10 This collection is conserved in the archives of the Ministry of Marine (Château de Vincennes). See Bilici, *XIV. Louis ve İstanbul'u fetih tasarisi*, pp. 145–47.

11 Mansel, *King of the World*, pp. 299–300.

12 Bilici, *XIV. Louis ve İstanbul'u fetih tasarisi*, pp. 327–29.

and spring 1686.¹³ As early as April 1686, they presented a detailed report of the fortifications of the straits and the surroundings of Constantinople, including the possibilities of military intervention.¹⁴

The following missions were also carried out in the utmost secrecy, often under the cover of a Grand Tour or a scientific expedition. This was the case for Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656–1708), French botanist who travelled through the islands of Greece and visited Constantinople and the Black Sea between 1700 and 1702. He already had a very important career behind him when Louis XIV entrusted him with the mission to bring new plants to the Royal Botanical Garden (*Jardin Royal des Plantes*) and also with a mission to make a reconnaissance of the defence system of the Ottoman capital. Tournefort started out on his voyage in the spring of 1700, accompanied by the French painter Claude Aubriet. He visited thirty-eight islands of the Greek archipelago, as well as Anatolia, Pontus, and Armenia, and reached Tiflis in Georgia. He returned to France in June 1702. In his relation of his voyage he gives us a very disappointing description of the pathetic state of the castles:

And yet this passage might be forced without much danger, the Castles being above four miles asunder: the Turkish Artillery, however monstrous they look, would not much annoy the Ships, if they had a good Wind, and went in a file. The Port-holes of the Cannon, which are the largest I ever beheld, not being set on Carriages, can't fire above once. And who would dare to charge 'em in the presence of Ships of War, that would pour in such Broad-sides upon 'em, as would soon demolish the Walls of the Castles which are not terrass'd and buy beneath their Ruins both Guns and Gunners? half a dozen Bombs would do the business.¹⁵

During the eighteenth century, mapmaking developed considerably, and we can find many maps on the region. The first map of high quality was made by a French military engineer, Poul Bohn (1687–?), an agent in the service of the exiled Prince of Transylvania, Francis Rákóczi II (with some other French agents). He worked very closely with the renegade Claude-Alexandre de Bonneval and the French ambassador to Constantinople, the Marquis de Villeneuve. Villeneuve, in his letter of 12 March 1734, mentions the engineer Bohn in the entourage of Prince Rákóczi who made maps of the regions of the

13 Apostolou, *L'orientalisme des voyageurs français au XVIII^e siècle*, p. 37.

14 *Memoire concernant le detroit de l'Elespont ou des Dardanelles. De ses quatre chasteaux, de leurs mouillages, les moyens de les passer. De la ville et villages du detroit de Gallipoly; des villes, bourgs et isles de la Propontide ou mer de Marmara; de la ville, port environs de Constantinople, jusques à l'entrée de la mer Noire; de partie des isles de l'Archipel; de la ville de Smirne en Azie et de celle de Salonich en Europe.* We know of two copies of the same report: the first one is conserved in the Archives du dépôt des services hydrographiques de la Marine (vol. v, n.°2), and the second copy is in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (MS f. 5580).

15 Tournefort, *A voyage into the Levant*, I, p. 341.

Ottoman capital.¹⁶ As double agent, he could work officially and published his map in France, which was also used in England even until the second half of the eighteenth century. Some of his maps, signed as Poul Bohn, are in the cartographic collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The first is a manuscript map that depicts a broader area from the Sea of Marmara to the Black Sea and Constantinople channels.¹⁷ The success of the manuscript map clearly indicates that several versions have been incorporated into the French national library collection. Among them, one dated from 1732 is a coloured map largely considered to be the last manuscript copy of a map of better quality.¹⁸ A more detailed map of the vicinity of Constantinople and the Bosphorus Strait also includes the name of Rákóczi's military engineer 'P. D. Bohn'.¹⁹ There is also another manuscript map of the Sea of Marmara from 1732 in the collection, which Bohn may also have made according to the library catalogue.²⁰ Based on the work of a French military engineer, some printed maps in English were also made in the second half of the century.²¹ Most likely, Bohn's maps served as models for the printer Ibrahim Müteferrika's maps of the Marmara and Black Seas.²² In French diplomatic correspondence we find more information that Ibrahim Müteferrika, with the help of Claude-Alexandre de Bonneval, made maps for Prince Rákóczi.²³ They worked closely with András Tóth, a Hungarian agent in French service.²⁴ Later, in 1755, the French royal secret diplomacy (*Secret du Roi*) sent András Tóth's younger son, François Baron de Tott, to Constantinople to improve his knowledge of Eastern languages and to study Ottoman political and social relations. In August 1757, the young man reported on the results of his observations in the Ottoman capital in a detailed dissertation (*Mémoire sur la Turquie*), in which

16 Villeneuve's letter to Germain Louis Chauvelin, Secretary of State for Justice (Constantinople, 12 March 1734), BnF, MS fr. 7180: *Ambassade à Constantinople de M. le marquis de Villeneuve — Lettres de Villeneuve à Monseigneur le garde des Sceaux* (déc. 1734–1735), fols 60–61. On the diplomatic role of the Secretaries of State for Justice (Gardes des sceaux), see Barbiche, 'De la commission à l'office de la Couronne'.

17 BnF, Cartes et Plans, GE SH 18 PF 98 DIV 2 P 9.

18 BnF, Cartes et Plans, GE SH 18 PF 98 DIV 2 P 9/1.

19 BnF, Cartes et Plans, GE C-10441.

20 BnF, Cartes et Plans, GE SH 18 PF 98 DIV 2 P 10.

21 The first printed British map, known as a copy of Bohn, was made in 1770: BnF, Cartes et Plans, GE SH 18 PF 98 DIV 2 P 13. The map was drawn by the engraver Peter Andrews, and his work was dedicated to the English Ambassador James Porter. At the same time, a more detailed English map of the Bosphorus Strait was made. The preparation of the map was most likely related to Russian naval operations threatening the straits in 1770. See about this Tóth, *La guerre russo-turque*. Later, in 1786, another version was released: BnF, Cartes et Plans, GE SH 18 PF 98 DIV 2 P 26.

22 Ibrahim Müteferrika printed in his printing press office three maps: one on Iran (1729–1730), another one on the Sea of Marmara (1719–1720), and a third on the Black Sea (1724–1725).

23 See the relevant sections of Marquis Villeneuve's correspondence in Constantinople. BnF, MSS f. fr. 7177–98.

24 See Tóth, 'Magyar ügynökök'.

he also mentioned the fortifications of the Dardanelles.²⁵ Due to the strange and unpredictable whim of history, he later also played an important role in surveying the straits and building new fortifications there.²⁶

With the development of hydrography, many maps were drawn representing also the currents and streams of the sea water. The Austro-Russian-Turkish War between 1735 and 1739 drew the attention of geographers to the region. Military operations in the Crimea and the Black Sea, as well as in the Balkans, raised the strategic importance of the straits, but the victories of the Ottoman armies stabilized the situation of Constantinople.²⁷ It is worth remembering the importance of the cartographer Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697–1782) in the middle of the eighteenth century, who wrote a memoir on the maps of the straits of the Dardanelles at the Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres. In this work, he corrected the measurements and scales of the old maps, and he specified the locations of the castles.²⁸

The principal person of the next important military mission concerning the question of the fortifications of the straits was a French officer of Hungarian origins, the above-mentioned François Baron de Tott,²⁹ who had some experience in mapmaking and military engineering. In 1755, he was sent to Constantinople to learn Turkish and to gather information about the Ottoman Empire. In 1767, he was appointed French consul in Crimea with a secret mission to incite the Tatars to make war against Russia. After completing his mission, he left Crimea and moved to Constantinople, where he was tasked by the Ottoman government to defend the Dardanelles against the Russian fleet. This he did, and then played a major role in the modernization of the Ottoman army during the Russo-Turkish War (1768–1774).³⁰

25 'Ce que j'ai vu de leurs fortifications se borne à la vérité aux châteaux des Dardanelles que je n'ai même pu examiner que légèrement et en passant. Cependant j'ose vous assurer, Monsieur, que rien n'est plus mal bâti, et avec moins de règle que ces barrières de la capitale turque, et ce que la nature semble avoir pris plaisir de faire d'avantageux paroît en même tems englouti sous l'ignorance de leurs ingénieurs, si tant est que ces entrepreneurs qui n'obtiennent la préférence lorsqu'il faut bâtir quelques ouvrages qu'en offrant de la faire à plus bas prix puissent mériter ce titre.' (What I have seen of their fortifications is really limited to the Dardanelles castles, which I have only been able to examine lightly and in passing. However, I dare to assure you, Sir, that nothing is more badly built, and with less regulation than these barriers of the Turkish capital, and what nature seems to have taken pleasure in doing advantageously seems at the same time swallowed up, under the ignorance of their engineers, so much so that these entrepreneurs who do not obtain the preference when it is necessary to build some works by offering to do it at a lower price can deserve this title.) AD, CP Turquie, vol. CXXXIII, fol. 283.

26 See Palóczy, *Báró Tóth Ferenc a Dardanellák megerősítője*, and more recently Tóth, *Egy magyar származású francia diplomata életpályája*.

27 See Tóth, *La guerre des Russes et des Autrichiens*.

28 Bourguignon d'Anville, *Analyse de la carte*, pp. 32–34.

29 On his life, see Tóth, *Un diplomate militaire français*.

30 See on this topic Tóth, *La guerre russo-turque*.

The naval battle of Chesma (5 July 1770) was a real turning point in the Russo-Turkish War. The situation became critical for the very existence of the Ottoman Empire. On the proposal of the Count of St-Priest, Reïs Efendi sent Baron de Tott at the end of July 1770 to make the strait capable of resisting the victorious fleet of Admiral Alexei Grigoryevich Orlov. Baron de Tott arrived in the last moment at the fortresses of the strait to save the Ottoman capital. He analysed quickly the state of the defence system of the Dardanelles and, as he noted in his *Memoirs*, he observed the precarious state of the castles:

The Russian squadron, then sailing, with a favourable wind, in sight of the first castles, might, with ease, penetrate into the Sea of Marmora, and advance to the very walls of the Seraglio, and prescribe its own terms to the Grand Signior. Such was the situation of this proud Court: the ignorance of the chief ministers, and knavery the subalterns, had reduced it to a state so low, so humiliating and so distressing. An examination of the castles, built near Constantinople, on the same plan with those of the Dardanelles, served to show me what was to be done, on my arrival.³¹

The Russian fleet made a single attempt to force the passage, which was quite easy to carry out, but eventually, thanks to the 'red hot ball' tactics employed by Baron de Tott, the Russians gave it up.³² This brilliant action contributed to his great fame and succeeded in reassuring the frightened Turkish soldiers. The fortification work lasted about two months. He had batteries built and organized the direction of the guns in order to allow the best possible defence of the Dardanelles. During this time, he carefully observed this strategic strait as he remarked later in his *Memoirs*:

The strait of the Dardanelles, situated fifty leagues to the west of Constantinople, between the Archipelago and the little sea of Marmora, extends from the coast of Troy to Gallipoli over against Lampsacus. This space, about twelve leagues, of an unequal breadth contains different points in which the continents of Europe and Asia, which this strait separates, approach to within the distance of three or four hundred fathoms. Three leagues from its mouth, on the side next the Archipelago, at the narrowest part of the strait, have been built the two castles called the Dardanelles, the cannon of each commanded the opposite shore. These were, for a long time, the only barrier to secure Constantinople; but the Turks, becoming more fearful, though not more enlightened, at length, built two others,

³¹ Tott, *Memoirs*, II, pp. 32–33.

³² 'On my arrival, in the evening, at the Dardanelles, I caused a small piece of canon, taken from the Venetians, to be brought out; and after having heated some bullets red hot, and charged the piece, I gave the spectators, who always followed me in crouds, a flight specimen of red hot balls. The Pacha and the Turks, who were present at this experiment, thought the Ottoman Empire already avenged for the destruction of its fleet.' Tott, *Memoirs*, II, p. 43.

near the mouth; but as they are at the distance of fifteen hundred fathoms, their fire is uncertain, and their defence insufficient.³³

The threat of the Russian fleet on the Black Sea demanded the fortification of the entrance to the Bosphorus. As he relates in his *Memoirs*, this work was also entrusted to Baron de Tott who determined the places of the new fortresses according to his personal measurements and gunfire experiences:

This experiment, several times repeated, confirmed our observations and decided the question. [...] I dined with the ministers, and we afterwards reembarked, to return to discover, as we went along, a proper situation for the two castles, thought necessary for the defence of the Bosphorus. We quickly found such a one: the two first capes we passed, placed at a convenient distance, and situated in such a manner as to defend the anchoring places before them, seemed as if intended for the very purpose.³⁴

After having made his plans, he began their realization on 16 February 1773. The works lasted several years, practically until the departure of Baron de Tott in 1776. After his return to France, he was associated with the plans to colonize Ottoman territories. During his last eastern mission (1777–1778), he visited French consulates around the Mediterranean Sea and elaborated secret military plans for the occupation of Egypt. In his *Memoirs*, he left us a wonderful history of his activities.

Baron de Tott was a good observer and an excellent painter. He made a lot of drawings, and some of them were published in his *Memoirs*. Its engraving showing the new castles on the Bosphorus reminds us of the military drawings of the expedition of Gravier d'Ortières eighty years earlier (Fig. 3.1).

A painting of Antoine van der Steen, certainly based on a picture of military reconnaissance of the same period, represents a fort built under the direction of Tott. This view of the Dardanelles, conserved in the Rijksmuseum, shows not without a certain irony the French contribution to the defence of Constantinople.³⁵

Ten years after Tott's mission, during the embassy of the Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, the French government sent a new official military mission to Constantinople led by André-Joseph de Lafitte-Clavé in order to check up on and continue the previous achievements in fortifications of the straits. The military reconnaissance report was drawn up by André-Joseph de Lafitte-Clavé on the order of the king in 1784, ten years after the end of the Russo-Turkish War and just a year after the first occupation of Crimea by Russian troops. The international situation changed radically: Catherine II continued to develop her 'Greek project', and she discussed with Emperor

33 Tott, *Memoirs*, II, pp. 39–40.

34 Tott, *Memoirs*, II, p. 148.

35 <<https://useum.org/artwork/View-of-the-Dardanelles-Antoine-van-der-Steen-1770>> [accessed 27 May 2021].



Figure 3.1. View of the two New Fortresses built by Baron de Tott at the entrance of the Bosphorus towards the Black Sea. Engraving after the drawing by Baron de Tott, private collection. Photo courtesy of National Széchenyi Library.

Joseph II the division of the Ottoman Empire. The Crimea was considered as the gateway to Constantinople, and the Black Sea was no longer an Ottoman lake.³⁶ In the first part of Lafitte-Clavé's report concerning the new fortifications of the Dardanelles, the French military engineer describes the fortresses built under the direction of Baron de Tott. Lafitte-Clavé described the artillery present in the castles at that time. The description of the new castles in Europe and Asia presents a condition almost identical to that before the war. Most of the guns are old and remain poorly maintained. The report also criticizes certain aspects of the construction of the new forts (position, problems with smoke evacuation, etc.). The military mission also examined the state of new fortifications on the Bosphorus. The report underlines the general characteristics of these fortifications, which are really only fortified and closed batteries. The result, as the author notes, despite their strengths, is the extreme vulnerability of this defence system. In summary, he asserts that these forts are capable of withstanding a maritime attack as long as enemy troops do not land in large numbers on the coasts. The landing of a large land army would be fatal to these forts, which are supplied daily with food and which receive water from the outside. Apart from the proposed architectural changes, the author of the report underlines the importance of the logistical

³⁶ Mansel, *Constantinople*, pp. 204–05.

shortcomings of these forts which should be corrected by the construction of wheat stores, bakeries for the manufacture of bread, and cisterns to ensure water supply to the defenders during a long siege.³⁷

The French governments of the nineteenth century were no less interested in the state of the forts of the Dardanelles than those of the Ancien Régime. Numerous handwritten reports bear witness to this, for the most part buried at the bottom of the boxes of the archives, as well as the travel accounts over the pages of works printed for the French military. The *Voyage militaire dans l'empire othoman* published in 1829 by Félix de Beaujour, inspector of the French consulates and counters in the Levant, is just the tip of the iceberg. This diplomat and military expert travelled most of the territory of the Ottoman Empire and made pertinent remarks on its defence system. He often refers to the activity of Baron de Tott whom he regards as his predecessor in inspecting French establishments in the Middle East.³⁸

During this period, we can observe radical changes in the perception in France regarding the question of the Ottoman capital's defence. At the end of the seventeenth century, in spite of the good relations between the two powers, the young Louis XIV sometimes participated in military operations, and made plans of occupations, but a hundred years later, with the opening of the Eastern question, the strategic importance of the straits of Dardanelles and Bosphorus increased. The Ottoman Empire became an important element of the balance of powers, and France contributed by the successful military missions to save the 'sick man of Europe'. The view of the straits' fortresses changed dramatically. The spirit of the Crusades gave way to the principle of the balance of power, and the fortresses were to symbolically defend the European order. The testimonies of military engineers, diplomats, and French travellers reflected these changes which made the bastions of the Ottoman despotism the bulwarks of European equilibrium. Later, during the Greek war of independence the image of the straits as military border had changed again. The orientation of opposing forces reinforced the border image of

37 Tóth, *Un diplomate militaire français*, pp. 132–39.

38 'Le fort Tott, construit au-dessus du cap Éléonte sur la côte d'Europe, pour lier la première position à la seconde, est une batterie détachée de treize embrasures, retranschée à sa gorge et flanquée de tourelles. Ce fort est bien entendu assis sur un pic élevé, en face de l'embouchure du canal et à l'opposite du cap Rhétée, il n'est point dominé, et tous les vaisseaux qui entrent sont obligés de lui présenter la proue: il est par son élévation à l'abri de leur feu qui pourrait à peine en écrêter les merlons. L'ouvrage de Tott est très bien tracé, et les Turks ont mal fait de le laisser dégrader'. (Fort Tott, built above Cape Éléonte on the European coast, to link the first position to the second, is a detached battery of thirteen embrasures, retracted to its gorge and flanked by turrets. This fort is of course seated on a high peak, opposite the mouth of the canal and opposite Cape Rhétée, it is not dominated, and all the vessels which enter are obliged to present the prow to it: it is by its elevation sheltered from their fire which could hardly clip the merlons. Tott's book is very well laid out, and the Turks did wrong to let it degrade.) Beaujour, *Voyage militaire dans l'empire othoman*, II, p. 490.

two continents and two diametrically opposed civilizations. By the act of bravery of Lord Byron who swam across the Hellespont, a four-mile stretch of symbolic importance in memory of the legendary Greek hero Leander's achievement, the Dardanelles Strait thus became a symbol of Romanticism. But that is another history.

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